



Thameside Primary School: Collective Worship Guidelines

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Contents

Introduction	p.3
What Collective Worship Is (definition & purpose)	p.3
Legal Requirements	p.4
Inclusivity and Exemptions	p.4
How Collective Worship Is Implemented (types, structure, features)	p.5
Assemblies & Class Worship Details	p.6
SMSC Contribution	p.7
School Values	p.7
Staff, Parent & Pupil Rights	p.7
Local Authority Guidance	p.8

Policy reviewed by:	Christina Koeries
Key Changes:	<p>Legal requirements section: addition of no specific duration being legally specified, and that silent prayer or reflection must be observed during each collective worship. Also that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily acts of worship should encourage participation and response from children. • Daily acts of worship should develop a community spirit as well as a shared ethos and values. • Daily acts of worship should consider spiritual and moral issues and allow children to explore their own beliefs. <p>Key features of Collective Worship section. Addition of clarification on use of candles – these are to be virtual or a digital image and not physical candles used.</p> <p>Addition of ‘Introduction’ and ‘What is Collective Worship?’.</p> <p>Types of Worship section. Removal of: ‘Chinese whispers’ from listed games. Also, the addition of: providing ‘thinking time’. First paragraph updated for clarification.</p> <p>Whole School and Key Stage Assemblies. Addition of: ‘On Wednesdays, they also have a curriculum/subject focus, where the assembly leader will approach collective worship from the subject or area they lead on within the school.’</p> <p>Class Assemblies. Addition of: ‘Friday afternoons’.</p> <p>Additional clarification added to Exemptions from Collective Worship section.</p>



Introduction

Collective Worship plays an integral role in the life of the school. It provides a shared space for pupils and staff to reflect on values, explore beliefs, celebrate achievements and strengthen the sense of community that underpins our school ethos. While our acts of Collective Worship are broadly Christian in character, they are inclusive in nature and are intended to be meaningful and enriching for all pupils, regardless of background or belief.

This policy outlines our statutory obligations, our guiding principles and the practical ways in which Collective Worship is delivered. It also sets out the arrangements for exemptions and clarifies the responsibilities and rights of pupils, staff and parents.

2. What is Collective Worship?

The government requires an act of Collective Worship for all registered pupils in maintained schools on a daily basis. The Department for Education's (DfE) 'Religious Education and Collective Worship Circular 1/94' states:

"Collective worship in schools should aim to provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God, to consider spiritual and moral issues and to explore their own beliefs, to encourage participation and response... and to develop community spirit, promote a common ethos and shared values, and re-enforce positive attitudes." (para 50)

Definition of Worship in Schools

'Worship' is not defined in legislation. In schools, it should reflect something special or distinct from everyday activity and should involve reverence or veneration towards a divine being or power. However, because school communities are diverse, school worship differs from worship within religious communities. This is why the law refers to **collective** rather than **corporate** worship.

Christian Character Requirement

Acts of worship must be *wholly or broadly Christian in nature*. This means including elements linked to Christian belief (such as stories about Jesus), but does **not** require every act to be Christian in content. The DfE advises that at least **51% of acts of worship each term** should be broadly Christian.

Collective Worship must:

- be inclusive, not presupposing shared belief
- allow children of all faiths or none to participate
- be enriching and meaningful to all
- be sensitive to the school's diverse community



Interpreting Worship in School

Worship in this policy is interpreted as pupils coming together to explore, question, reflect and respond - either spiritually, emotionally or thoughtfully. Pupils may participate actively or choose reflective observation.

Collective Worship is distinct from assembly but may sit within an assembly if marked clearly as the worship element.

3. Legal Requirements

- All pupils must be offered a daily act of Collective Worship unless withdrawn by parents.
- Worship may occur at any point in the school day.
- There is no statutory duration.
- It may take place as whole school, key stage, class or group worship.
- It must take place on school premises (off-site worship is additional).
- Worship must be wholly or broadly Christian in nature.
- Time for silent reflection or prayer must be included.
- Worship should encourage participation and develop community spirit.
- It should help children explore spiritual and moral issues and reflect on their own beliefs.

(Reception classes are exempt from the statutory requirement.)

4. Inclusivity and Flexibility

Pupil Non-attendance for Educational or Wellbeing Reasons

In certain circumstances, pupils may not attend Collective Worship due to specific needs, inclusion considerations or targeted interventions. These decisions:

- are made in the child's best interests
- do not equate to parental withdrawal
- do not remove the school's duty to provide daily worship
- are considered part of reasonable adjustments for inclusion and wellbeing

Parental Withdrawal

Parents may withdraw their child from Collective Worship by writing to the Headteacher. Withdrawal may be requested at any time.



Teacher and Staff Rights (Union Guidance)

Teachers should seek advice from their unions regarding individual circumstances. Broad rights are:

- In community schools, teachers cannot be required to lead or attend worship.
 - They *can* be required to supervise during the non-worship parts of assembly.
 - Teachers cannot be required to teach RE unless explicitly contracted to do so.
 - Teachers cannot be disadvantaged for their religious opinions or for not attending worship.
 - Under the STPCD, teachers must follow the reasonable direction of the Headteacher.
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5. Guidance on Christian Character in Worship

Teachers may incorporate Christian elements such as:

- Optional prayers for listening and reflection
- Stories about Jesus
- Bible verses for reflection
- Christian festivals
- Hymns or reflective songs
- Themes such as kindness, forgiveness, charity
- Exploration of shared humanity and community

Worship should remain sensitive and inclusive, never requiring pupils to participate in faith-specific practices such as praying to Jesus.

6. Key Features of Collective Worship

Collective Worship should:

- be planned and clearly distinct within the school day
- respect staff and pupil integrity
- be educational and relevant
- encourage engagement
- promote reflection and thought
- foster community and shared values

Atmosphere may be enhanced through:

- music
- visual focus points
- low lighting
- digital candles or imagery



7. Types of Collective Worship

Class Worship (e.g., Circle Time)

Circle Time may explore:

- Christian themes
- other world faiths
- curriculum links
- pastoral issues arising in class

Guidance:

- the circle represents equality
- maintain a calm and reflective atmosphere
- run circle times simultaneously across classes to avoid disruption
- children form and settle the circle calmly
- begin/end with a simple game
- ensure comfort, inclusion and fairness
- allow children to pass but return later to offer another chance
- include support staff where appropriate
- younger pupils may use an object for turn-taking
- model respectful listening
- include time for reflection at the end

Circle Time may also support PSCHE, British Values and Rights Respecting Schools.

Key Stage or Whole School Assemblies

- **Wednesdays:** Key Stage assemblies led by teachers on a rota
- **Mondays:** Whole school assemblies led by the Headteacher
- **Fridays:** Class-led whole school assemblies

Assemblies should:

- be held in a suitably large space
- avoid unnecessary noise during setup
- create a reflective atmosphere before children enter
- involve quiet, calm transitions
- celebrate achievements
- link to British Values or InsideOut Happiness Keys
- include a curriculum/subject focus on Wednesdays
- use visual focus where possible



- include reflection time
 - finish with calm exit music
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Class Assemblies for Parents

- Held on Friday afternoons
 - Each class presents at least once per term
 - Parents are invited and encouraged to participate
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8. SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social & Cultural Development)

Collective Worship contributes to SMSC development.

Spiritual

- acquiring beliefs and values that guide behaviour

Moral

- understanding right and wrong, intentions and behaviour

Social

- developing skills to function effectively in society

Cultural

- understanding beliefs, customs and values that support identity and cohesion

The wider school ethos and value system also promote SMSC development.

9. School Values

- **Belonging** – respect, pride, volunteering, tolerance
- **Resilience** – determination, perseverance
- **Assurance** – emotional regulation, participation
- **Independence** – good decision making, productivity
- **Integrity** – honesty, trust, moral understanding
- **No limits** – ambition, aspiration, striving for excellence



10. Additional Local Authority Guidance (January 2026)

The school recognises the advisory role of Reading SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education). While responsibility for Collective Worship rests with the school, SACRE's advice will be considered where appropriate to support the needs of the school community.

C Koeries, January 2026